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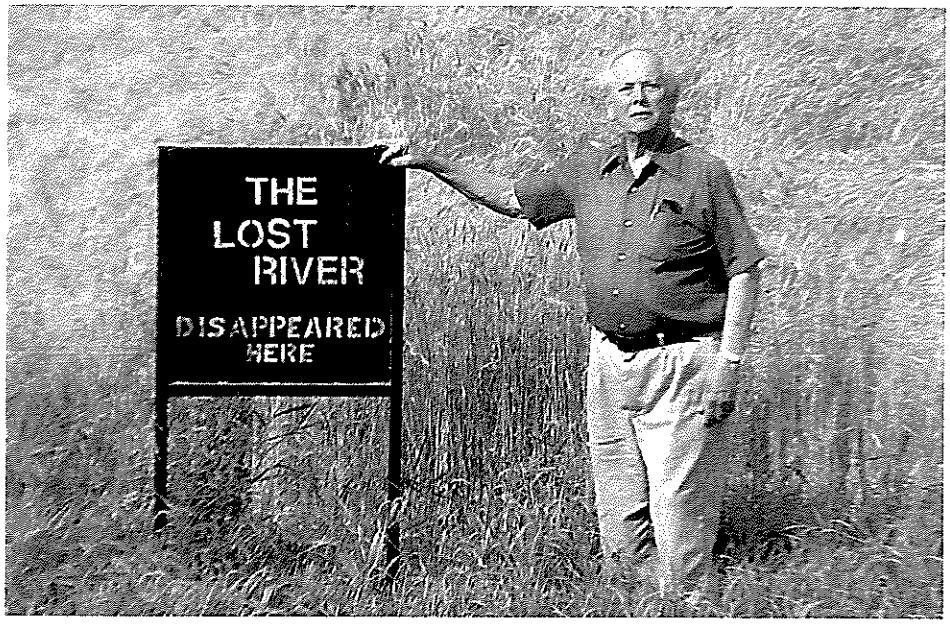
MOVING? Let us know of your address change BEFORE you move; you won't miss out, & we won't have it Bounce!



Gerhard Epp - VIGNETTES FROM SASKATCHEWAN A CENTURY AGO
Drawn from the diary of GERHARD EPP (1864-1919) REISEPREDIGER
Prepared by Walter Klaassen

It was cold out there north of the North Saskatchewan River in December, 1914. Two men were sitting in an open sleigh drawn by a pair of ponies. They were making their slow, trackless way across prairie and the forested Thickwood Hills country to a destination some 64 km to the northwest of the Eigenheim church. Both were Mennonite ministers, Gerhard Epp, from Eigenheim near Rosthern, and Johann Gerbrandt from Drake. They had been sent out by the Home Mission Board of the Mennonite church to give spiritual care to scattered Mennonite families who had settled in the wilderness north and west of Blaine Lake. There were trails out there, but few roads.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

Gerhard Epp reported in his diary that he and his wife Katharina had arrived in Rosthern from Ukraine on March 16, 1894. He and Katharina, his sister Elizabeth and her husband, Heinrich Wieler, his brother Johann, and their mother Judith had taken up *(cont'd page 4)*

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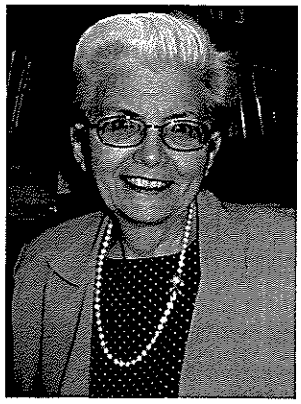
The Editor's Perspective

Ruth Marlene Friesen



A trusted advisor has suggested that we can make more space for articles by reducing our masthead info (left side of this page) to a much smaller font, and only publishing the Honour List on the back page once a year. Also to only list the contents once on the front cover. So these are the changes you will notice first off.

I must apologize for the very small font for the cemetery lists. I didn't realize that they would not fit on the three blank columns until I got to work at it. Then the only solution was to reduce the font size to 8. However, I didn't want to ignore those who don't get on the internet as easily as many of us do.

You are probably wondering if we are going to do a Christmas theme issue again as we did last year. In a way, yes!

This seems to be the year for immigration to Canada, and because most Mennonites have either a personal story of coming to Canada, or else a story that has been handed down from generation to generation, we thought we would invite you to write and send in YOUR story of coming to Canada. This can have a Christmas tie-in; remember, even baby Jesus was a refugee in a strange country, Egypt.

It can be 1-3 pages long, and we all like to see a picture or two. Send it in by email if you can, or by regular mail, but I would like them in by October 5 at the latest, so I have time to work on the layout.

We have at least three events-related articles already in the works, so it will not be totally immigration stories.

Warning: latecomers may get bumped if we run out of space, so early submissions is best.

Blessings & Thanks,
Ruth

MHSS President's Corner

by Jake Buhler

One hundred years ago, from July to November, in the Battle of the Somme in France, 600,000 Germans, and 500,000 western troops died in fierce fighting from July 1 to November 18.

Canadian fatalities were 25,000. The Memorial Gates at the University of Saskatchewan pay tribute to professors and students who died in that horrific battle that historians say should not have happened. We do not have a lot of information about the role of Mennonites in the First World War. Please help us with what you may know so we can write an article in 2018.

Also one hundred years ago, near the tiny hamlet of Osler, Johann Driedger was quarreling with Aeltester Jakob Wiens, for having excommunicated him for his liberal acts of driving a car and operating a general store. The letters we have in the archives show how passionate Johann was about his church, but he was ahead of time. What are the issues today that may show we are behind God's time in 2016?

Refugees: One of the first New Testament refugees that we know about was Jesus who spent the first two years of his life in Egypt. What are your "refugee" stories? We hope to carry a number of refugee stories in the next edition of the Historian. Please give this some thought.

On Saturday, November 12 at 10 am, Dr Tim Epp of Redeemer College in Hamilton will speak at Bethany Manor in Saskatoon on the subject of *how African Canadians have lived side by side with Mennonites in Saskatchewan and elsewhere in Canada*. You are Welcome!

Historical - Mennonite - Events left for your 2016 Calendar

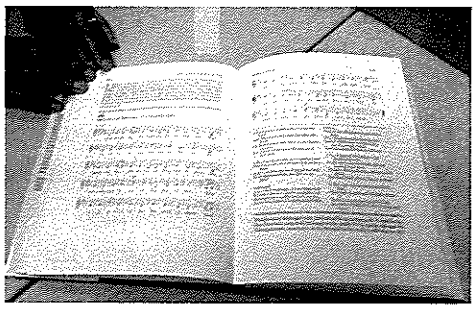
September 17, **Old Time Threshing Day** at Hague, SK. Starting with a pancake breakfast at 8 am. and food all day while 1920s-30s farming and threshing is demonstrated.

November 5, **MCC Encounter and AGM** at Rosthern Junior College (RJC), Rosthern

November 12 - (Saturday) - Dr. Timothy Epp - and others, on "***Mennonites and Blacks as Good Neighbours***." starting 10 am. at Bethany Manor Fellowship Hall. Sponsored by MHSS. (See Dr. Epp's article in this issue).

Want to Write Book Reviews for the Historian?

We want to draw attention to books that have something important to say about our Mennonite history and culture - most particularly if they are by our own Saskatchewan-born Mennonites. Please see Victor Wiebe's criteria for how to write an objective, quality book review: *mhss.sk.ca/books/How-to-Review-a-Book.shtml*

When we publish a review, readers often want to order the book right away. If it is on our book list that makes Vera Falk very happy. (So you might want to choose one to review from our book lists). *mhss.sk.ca/books/*

Sometimes a really great book about Mennonite history and culture is so rare it is out of print, or tied up in complicated publisher or translation contracts. We have adapted our policy to allow exceptions for reviews of truly appropriate books - even if hard – or impossible to buy.

Gerhard Epp VIGNETTES FROM SASKATCHEWAN A CENTURY AGO
Drawn from the diary of GERHARD EPP (1864-1919) REISEPREDIGER
Prepared by Walter Klaassen

cont'd from page 1:
homesteads seven miles west of the town of Rosthern at a place which the mother, Judith, called Eigenheim. Several of Gerhard's older half-brothers and sisters were already established on homesteads. In September, 1894, the minister Peter Regier and family arrived in the settlement from Prussia. He quickly became the leader of the emerging church which he named Rosenort after his church in Prussia.

To supplement the first meagre income from his farm, Gerhard Epp, as he said, "hired himself out" as the school teacher in October, 1894, soon after their arrival. There were ten pupils; he was paid $2.00 and 5 bushels of wheat for each child. The school year lasted until April 3, 1895, when the work on the farm commenced with seeding wheat.

They had begun to make a home on the treeless prairie, blackened the year before by a prairie fire. The first task after seeding was to drive to the North Saskatchewan River, 22 km distant, dig out small poplar trees and return to plant them north of the house that was soon to be built. A well was dug. Frost destroyed the garden which had to be replanted, and all of it while Katharina was about to give birth again. In midsummer it was also decided to build a church. The diary entry for July 21 announced that Gerhard had been chosen as co-minister by a landslide vote. To the heavy weekday work of a father and farmer was now added the weekend task of preaching and the care of souls.

It was a demanding calling because the church that gathered at Eigenheim represented only part of his new spiritual homestead. Together with several other ministers he was committed to preach and give pastoral care to settlers in nine communities within a radius of approximately 19 km from Eigenheim. These communities were Rosthern, eleven km east, Bergtal, 6 km east of Rosthern, Laird, 9.6 km northwest of Eigenheim, Tiefengrund, 6 km north of Laird. Waldheim was 13 km west of Eigenheim, Danzig and Carmen just north of Waldheim, Schmidtsburg, 6 km west of Waldheim, and Silberfeld, southeast of Waldheim. Bergtal, Danzig, Carmen, Schmidtsburg and Silberfeld were local public schools used as church meeting places. The Mennonite churches at Great Deer, Hague, Aberdeen and Osler were also occasionally visited.

Until 1915 all of Gerhard Epp's pastoral work involved travel by horse and buggy or sleigh. Within that radius he travelled at least 4,800 km for 154 preaching appointments from 1895 to 1918, and at least 12 journeys of 32 km or more. In addition he took his regular turn at preaching and congregational activities in Eigenheim. Not only was he a preacher and counsellor; he was also a troubleshooter and peacemaker, often sent by Elder Regier to resolve family and church quarrels. Added to that were the frequent funerals, especially of small children. No wonder then, that there are virtually no diary entries for the years 1904-1908. He never complained about the vacationless grind. There is no indication in his diary that he ever received any kind of payment for his service. With the call to the ministry came a call to sacrifice time, energy, and physical and spiritual resources. He never got even seasonal time off as other farmers did. The frequent prayers in his diary are like the loud breathing of an inexperienced swimmer attempt-ing to reach shore.

We know about the winter journey of 1914 to the northwest from the detailed, lively description in Gerhard Epp's diary. The following account, as also the one of the journey to Lost River, were translated by his youngest daughter, Elizabeth Epp, and slightly amended by the author. From these accounts the reader is able to get an impression of what two areas of the Province were like a century ago.

BLAINE LAKE AND NORTHWEST

"Dec. 16. Around ten a.m. in God's name, we started on our journey into the unknown territory of the wild West. I had left my young horses in the barn [at Blaine Lake] and hired a team of ponies at $3.00 a day. The area got ever wilder, the homes of the settlers fewer, over steep stony hills, through creeks and ravines, all covered with bush. Gradually we entered the forest region, no prairie there; brush covering the hilly landscape as far as the eye could see. Our sleigh track grew ever fainter, the clumps of trees more frequent and dense. Every ravine and low area was over-grown with forest. Finally, on a barely visible forest track we drove through a deep, wild chasm, crossed the ice of a narrow stream, then around a small mountain lake flanked by tall spruce, and then climbing a steep hill, we arrived at Moonhill, a lonely Post Office. We asked for directions and continued on our way with our already somewhat tired ponies. Even so, we went astray several times. The crests of the often steep hills no longer gave us the hoped-for vistas. Much low brush, clumps of trees here and there like giant sentries; scattered, slim heaven-reaching spruce plus frequent lakes. Finally we reached a Russian settlement where Russian Baptists have built their log houses here and there. As it was already getting dark, we decided to try to find a place where we could stay for the night. An old mother whom we found alone welcomed us into her house. She told us that her husband and daughter had gone to the evening meeting. According to her custom she gave us a friendly welcome. She was acquainted with the Bible and eager to know about salvation.

"Dec. 17. In the morning we continued on our way. The frost had decreased, but a snowstorm blew up which threatened disaster for us because it created difficulties for our sense of direction. We took a wrong turn which took us ever farther into the forest. The branches of the trees and shrubs weighed down with hoar frost showered us with snow and whipped our faces. The trail took us ever deeper into the forest of slender poplars and birch which could have been twelve inches in diameter, until we could go no further. But it looped around, barely allowing us to turn around, and now we had to make our long way back six or eight km. A Russian settler now put us on the right road, and we started our course into the snowstorm once again along a wild, rugged valley enclosed by hills until, with some back and forth, we finally passed the Lorenzo Post Office [about 9.6 km east of present Mayfair], and arrived at brother and sister Peter Janzen's at 1 p.m. The young couple do not live on their farm but are wintering in a Russian hut abandoned by its owners. Most of the settlers are making use of the houses left by former owners."

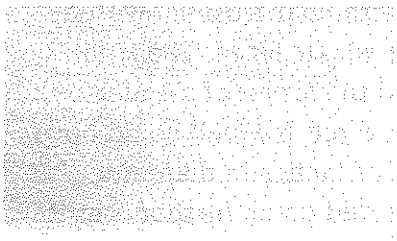
The next day they visited families, held some meetings, and began their return journey on December 19. They stopped at the village of Krydor, made several visits and concluded with an evening meeting in one of the homes. Another gathering on Sunday morning and a home visit with the Lord's Supper, and back to Blaine Lake in the afternoon.

It is likely that they visited acquaintances in Blaine Lake. A family named Funk ran a general store on main street. The family was Mennonite Brethren, but

Gerhard Epp was everyone's friend.

A day later they were back in Eigenheim.

Today, as one drives north of the village of Krydor into the Thick-wood Hills one sees a vista not much different from that of 1914. The hills, valleys, ravines, and lakes [sloughs] to which Epp referred, must have been a daunting prospect.



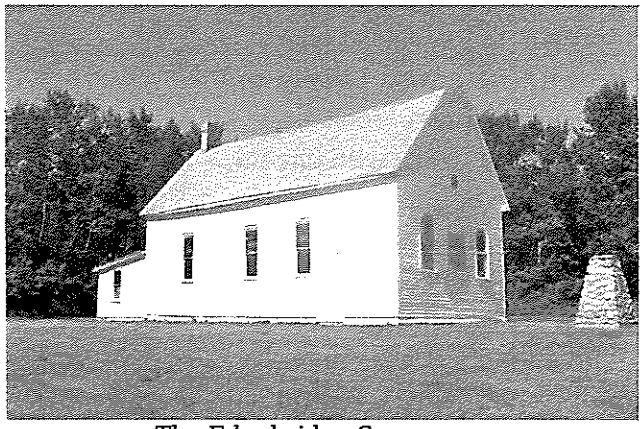
Settler's houses were scattered throughout the area, some of which still stand, silent and alone.

VISIT TO LOST RIVER

Seven months later a summons came to Gerhard Epp to go to Lost River and help the people there solve some serious problems. Mennonites had settled there at the west end of the Carrot River Mennonite Reserve at the beginning of the 20th century and had begun the first meetings to form a church in 1906.

Gerhard Epp went alone this time and again described the landscape he passed through. He boarded the train at Rosthern, changed at Prince Albert, and got off at Star City, two stops beyond Melfort.

"June 7, Monday. Today, in the name of God, I started on my journey to Star City, the second railway station beyond Melfort. The members of the Committee for Home Missions had commissioned me to visit the brothers of the faith there [Lost River], as they had written a letter to brother B. [Benjamin] Ewert, the secretary, urgently pleading that someone come to visit them. At six in the evening I arrived at Star City and hired a team and driver for $10.00. We set out for [Lost River] that same evening. We had to drive about 48 km to get to the German settlement. Due to a three-day rain, the road was very soft and muddy. Despite a good team of horses, progress was slow. After driving a distance of about 16 [actually 20] km, we passed through a Jewish settlement [named Edenbridge]. The settlers had taken up farms on both sides of a small, insignificant stream called the Carrot River. It flowed toward the Saskatchewan River in a deep ravine, and is at approximately the mid-point to the German settlement. Above, on the right bank, there is a Jewish store, a stopping place for travellers. A good bridge spans the river which had been built by the government five or



The Edenbridge Synagogue

six years earlier. The farther we drove, the larger the forest became. To right and left we could see the lofty dark tips of the slender 30 metre tall spruce trees. The road grew progressively worse. Added to that was the fact that night had fallen and the darkness made the condition of the road seem worse. All the trees and brush had been cut away at the sides of the road. Over miles of swamp, boles of trees had been laid crosswise on the road to prevent travellers from sinking into the mire. Some of the tree trunks had been pushed out of their place, however, so that there were deep holes in some places. Nothing had been done to repair the road. So it meandered along, where possible on the road allowance, and then again losing itself in the forest. As if to delay our arrival, the friendly Jewish farmers had built their fences across the forest road. That's why we got into a deep hole in a forest stream, and the first couple of attempts by our tired horses to pull us out with the buggy failed because the edge of the hole was too steep. I was able to get out of

the buggy with dry feet, thus easing the load, and managed to jump across the narrow but deep stream back to buggy and team. The driver had in the meantime been able to get out of the hole without breaking anything. No end to the forest. In the swamps and creeks conifers, on the hills

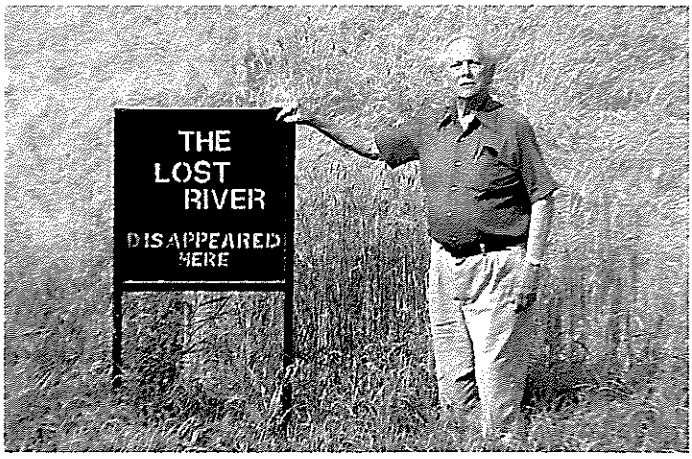
different species of firs and in between large poplar growth. At twelve midnight we arrived safely without mishap and unharmed on the yard of brother Gerhard P. Neufeld. The driver roused them and they received us with joy, and we were able to recover and rest.

June 8. In the morning brother Neufeld and I went to visit the Rev. Aaron A. Derksen. Old Mr. Heinrich Neufeld, Derksen's father-in-law and Gerhard Neufeld's brother also came. First a program for our visit was drawn up. It was decided that on Wednesday and Thursday, June 9 and 10, I would conduct services morning and evening. On Tuesday I wanted to make house visitations with these brothers.

I also expressed the wish to see the [Saskatchewan] River, only 2.4 km away, where nature had showered so much beauty on river, hills, and forests. Johann Hoeppner, my second cousin, whose wife died recently, lives near the River. Just a km from his yard the majestic river flows proudly along. The two Saskatchewan Rivers have merged here to form one imposing flood which, with innumerable eddies, carries its dull, yellowish tide to Lake Winnipeg. The soil of this area appears to be good and unusually fruitful. On neither hills or in low areas is there any alkali; it is good everywhere.

When all the roots are removed it will be easy to work. Numerous creeks crisscross the fields, at the sides of which stand the most magnificent spruce, some of them towering over 30 metres into the air. Across the creeks we passed, dams had been built, I was told, by the industrious beaver folk. We crossed the creeks on those dams. As is known, the beavers build these dams to create ponds so that they are able to have the doors to their lodges under water. They build their dams with tree trunks, branches, and mud. A seemingly unimportant brook is, I was told, the Lost River. During the rainy season it is fed by the wetlands and swamps of the spruce forest, but then disappears from the surface into a poplar glade. Hence the name, Lost River.

What a forest it must have been before the colossal fires devastated the virgin forest! Everywhere are the remains of the mighty, decaying forest giants! I measured one at 28 paces [ca. 12 metres]. It must have been at least another third



of this length since the entire top had been burned. Yes, and all of this before men with their penchant for destruction felled the trees and lit huge fires to clear their land. Even this spring there were fires. I was told that a terrible but majestic spectacle occurs when fire engulfs a fir tree. With lightning-like rapidity the flames shoot up and overwhelm the tree in an explosion of flame, shooting seven to ten metres into the sky beyond the top of the tree. In a short time all that is left is a black charred stump, a giant exclamation mark ending the chapter of human carelessness and the will to destroy. To prevent the

complete annihilation of the forests, the government has appointed forest wardens who keep an eye on the tree cutters and issue safety rules in order to prevent fires. The government intends to build a tower 60 metres high with a small room at the top from which the wardens can scan the surrounding forest and detect the endangered areas.

The condition of the church: the church at Lost River has suffered a schism. The immediate occasion was the decision to build a church, but there had been difficulties since the election of ministers. The congregational decision to build was overturned. Another vote was taken with a 50-50 outcome. Now both parties are building a church. The referred-to ministerial election had taken place on November 7, 1913. The main offence [producing the schism] was that, with the encouragement and desire of a few members, Rev. Derksen was to lead the instruction of the youth for baptism. They believed that elder Zacharias agreed with this. When, however, the elder came to serve with baptism, he scolded Rev. Derksen in his own house in a highly provocative manner and gave vent to his dissatisfaction in a startling outburst. All this happened before the congregational decision about building."

Gerhard Epp went on to report on meetings held, and was optimistic about the future of the group that had affiliated with the General Conference Mennonite Church.

"June 11. On Friday brother H. Neufeld took me to Star City. The Jewish settlement is remarkable. They like to see themselves as farmers, but every second mile there is a store next to the road. There is also a synagogue, a concert hall and a public school."

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Today one drives the distance from Star City to the Lost River settlement on a well maintained gravel road. On both sides of the road is cultivated farm land, interspersed with several wetland areas. Only a few descendants of the original conifer forest Epp described are left. Around the bridge across the Carrot River are the remains of the Jewish settlement, a few farmsteads and the synagogue, which is now a heritage site. Soon after the road bears right toward Codette a small sign to the left in the former wetland tells us that the Lost River disappeared at that point, as Gerhard Epp wrote, "into a poplar glade." There is no sign of either a poplar glade or a river. He would not now recognize this as the countryside he described a century ago. Perhaps he would be pleased that there is still a Mennonite church there.

Walter Klaassen is a grandson of Gerhard Epp.

W K

Correction in a past Article - October 2010 re: Artist, Eva Friesen

Many readers save their copies of this periodical, and we like to think we publish only truthful things, so when we discover that a wrong impression was given, we like to clarify the facts.

There was an article in the October, 2010 issue of the Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian about the art work of Eva (Friesen) Wieler. It was assumed in the article that this Eva Friesen was the mother of June (Wieler) Dyck who presently lives at Bethany Manor.

In a discussion of this article June insisted that it was not her mother Eva who was the artist; it was her grandmother, the mother of John C. and Jacob E. and Abram C. Friesen, who also was named Eva. That answers a few of the questions posed in the article.

What Is One Russian Ruble Worth Today?

by Victor Wiebe

Illustration: Commemorative 1 Ruble silver coin celebrating the 300 years of the Romanov Dynasty minted in 1913.

The Ruble is or was the currency of Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union and now of the Russia Federation. The symbol for the ruble is: []. The past hundred years have made the ruble a very unstable currency. For example through the nineteenth century to late 1917 one Russian Ruble was constant and equal to 50¢ Canadian. Then during the revolution and civil war periods there was hyperinflation and many changes to the paper currency with each new government issuing its own bills and making all past bills worthless. The Soviet Union with its centralized planned economy had a theoretic plan to eliminate or severely control money resulting in a fixed but unrealistic exchange rate. In 1927 the exchange rate was again set at: 1 [] = 50¢ Canadian, but by 1937 it was 1[] = 20¢ Canadian. Today the Russia Federation's economy is troubled and as of 1 June 2016 1 [] = 2¢ Canadian, yes a ruble is now worth only 2¢!

Just for completeness Ukraine as an independent country in 1993 left the ruble zone and introduced Karbovanets as its currency but it also had troubles. The Karbovanets was replaced by the hryvnia at a rate of 100,000 to 1 on 16 September 1996. The hryvna symbol is: ₴. How has this currency faired? Well as on 1 June 2016 1₴ = 5¢ Canadian, not very well.

Every person knows that a dollar today does not buy what a dollar bought ten years ago. There is constant inflation that seems to erode our money. This type of change gives historians a constant problem when trying to determine equivalent values of today with that of past values. A simple example of the problem is this. If I bought my house 20 years ago for $75,000 but today sell it for $200,000, did it gain or lose value? Another example that is even more difficult is to make a comparison as in this example. If a person in 1910 in Germany is fined 5 Deutsch Marks for public drunkenness but a person in America is only fined $4.00 for the same offence, which country treats that offence more seriously?

Just for comparison, in 1910 one Deutsch Mark was worth 25c USA, thus the USA fine is much more serious.

While slowly working through the papers and information accumulated by my parents I came upon the information that my great-grandfather, the Ältester Jakob Abram Wiebe (1853-1907), like all church leaders in Imperial Russia, was unpaid for preaching and other church work. However, he received an annual stipend of 200 rubles, ostensibly to keep the Church books.

I wondered, was 200 rubles a small amount of money, a reasonable amount, or a lot of money.

The idea of the comparative value of money has interested me for some time, particularly, how do you compare values between different time periods and with values of today. For example, what value would 200 rubles have in today's money?

I have arrived at the idea that one reasonable way of comparison would be to ask – how much work would have to be done to get that amount of money?

For example, a Canadian school teacher today could earn about $65,000 for a year's work. Then compare that value with the pay of a school teacher in Imperial Russia. In Imperial Russia Mennonite school teachers were well paid with teachers earning about 1,000 rubles per year. The 200 rubles is 20% of 1,000 so today's value of that sum would be 20% of $65,000 = $13,000. Not an insignificant amount but not enough pay for a full time job. On this basis: 1 Imperial Ruble

= Can $65.00 in today's money.

With this information I looked at the GAMEO article on Herman Abromovitch Niebuhr (1830-1906) who was one of the super-rich Mennonites in Imperial Russia and whose wealth was at least 11 million and probably close to 15 million rubles. Doing the math 11 million X $65 = $715,000,000 or 15 million X $65 = $975,000,000. With "rounding," that man, Niebuhr, could today claim to be a billionaire!

He was not alone. Frank H. Epp in one of his books claims that for every 1,000 Mennonites in Russia there was 1 millionaire. There were about 120,000 Mennonites in Russia by 1910 so there were about 120 Mennonites whose wealth was 65 million dollars or more. The mind numbs in thinking of their wealth. For comparison on the other end of the scale, Mennonites paid Ukrainian farm labourers annually 60 rubles plus room and board for the planting to harvest seasons of work and this was considered fair wages. In today's dollars this was equal to $3,900.

Just to finish the topic of wealth, before the First World War countries measured their wealth by the value of its farm products, by the value of the food their citizens produced. This is one of the reasons why Mennonite farmers were treated well as immigrants. In general a farmer who owned his own farm was considered at least well-to-do or wealthy. As we look back into our families' histories we should note that a family that owned a full farm was a wealthy family. *VW*

Liesje

Liesje saut un laus enn Buak
En krusa Rock, soon schmochket Duak
Mame schekjt ar Gerkjen weeden
Bieaum sull see die Malkj Kjieej heeden
See pluck leewa riepe Bäaren
Feeld sikj schuldich,
kunn daut späaren
Deeld de Bäaren alua ut

A little chance to try reading Plautdietche This is from Jackob M. Fehr's bilingual book; Candy-Coated Questions Children Ask// Kinja Fräag Met Socka Bestreit

Use Your Archives to Research Cemeteries

In this case, our records are mostly on the website, which can be accessed from the computer in the Archives – or, right from your own home.

For the benefit of those who do not have a computer, and will need help to obtain the detailed information, we will give you a list of the cemeteries in our database right now. On our website each of these name leads to another page with whatever information we have. It usually has a link to another page, a list of every burial and whatever details can be gleaned from the headstones.

If you do not have a computer you can ask a volunteer in the Archives to look up the ones you want to have details on, and they can print out those pages for you.

Of course, if you have a relative or friend with a computer and a printer, they can do this for you too, from home. ***mhss.sk.ca/cemeteries/***

CEMETERIES:

Aberdeen Community Cemetery
Aberdeen - Bergthal Südflusz Mennonite Cemetery
Aberdeen - Boschman Cemetery
Aberdeen - Clarkboro Cemetery
Aberdeen - Edenburg Mennonite Cemetery
Aberdeen - Guenther Cemetery
Aberdeen - MB Cemetery
Aberdeen - Olgafeld Cemetery
Aberdeen - Shanzenfeld Cemetery
Blaine Lake (Great Deer) - Bethel Cemetery
Blumenheim - Old Colony Cemetery
Blumenhof (Swift-Current) Mennonite Cemetery
Blumenhof - Banman/Fehr Cemetery
Borden/Great Deer Mennonite Brethren Cemetery
Bradwell Community Cemetery
Brotherfield-Waldheim Mennonite Brethren
Capeland (Main Centre) Evangelical Mennonite
Carrot River - Blue Jay - Bergthal Cemetery
Carson Community (Hepburn rural) Cemetery
Chortitz (SW-of-Hague) Cemetery
Chortitz - (Abe Leiding's Land) - Cemetery
Chortitza-Sommerfeld-EMC-Cemetery
Chortitz-Village-Sommerfeld-(RM-Coulee)
Dalmeny-Bible-Church-Cemetery
Dalmeny-Mennonite-Brethren (Ebenezer)
Dorintosh - Beaverdale Cemetery
Drake North Star Cemetery (Country Cemetery)

.... list continued on page-20

The Mennonite, Edgar Epp Encounters The Murderer, Waring Emele - by Victor Wiebe

Waring Holt Emele was a 35 year old farmer who stabbed his ex-wife, Mary Emele, to death in the teacherage of the small northern hamlet of Cookson, Saskatchewan, on 27 August, 1964. The stabbed body of Mary Emele's mother-in-law was also found in the teacherage. Waring was soon arrested, and after a trial that lasted from 26 January to 3 February, 1965 he was sentenced by Judge Walter Tucker to be hanged on 11 May, 1965 for Mary's murder. In Saskatchewan the only gallows was in the Prince Albert Correctional Institution for Men[1]. It was there that he was incarcerated awaiting execution[2].

In Canada capital punishment of civilians was by hanging. In the country's history only 710 of the 1,481 persons condemned to death by hanging are known to have suffered this final punishment. The last executions in Canada were the double hanging of Arthur Lucas and Ronald Turpin in Toronto's Don Jail on 11 December, 1962. In Canada, as in all western countries with a death penalty, the debate over the abolition of capital punishment has been very long and divisive.

In 1911 Angelina Napolitano was the first woman in Canada to use the battered woman defence on a murder charge and had her sentence commuted to life imprisonment. She served eleven years and then was released. In 1914 Robert Bickerdike, Member of Parliament, entered a Private Member's Bill for the abolition of capital punishment but it failed. In 1950 W. Ross Thatcher, a CCF Member of Parliament, made an attempt to amend the Criminal Code by introducing a Bill abolishing capital punishment but had to withdraw it for lack of support. In 1956 a joint committee of the House of Commons and Senate recommended the retention of capital punishment but left abolition open for further discussion. In 1961 the Criminal Code changed and reclassified murder into two parts, capital murder with a death penalty involved planned or deliberate murder, murder during violent crimes, or the murder of a police officer or prison guard. Other forms of murder were non-capital murder and they were punishable with long prison sentences.

Edgar Epp (left) with ministers Henry Funk and Irvin V. Schmidt looking at the gallows in the Prince Albert Correctional Centre for Men, 1966. Source: Mennonite Archives of Ontario (1994-14:1117).

With the 8 April, 1963 election of the Liberal Party under Lester Pearson the government began the practice of commuting most of the death sentences to life in prison. However, when the Cabinet was presented with the very brutal and violent Waring Holt Emele case, they declined to commute the sentence and the judgment to hang was affirmed.

In the Prince Albert Correctional Institution for Men Emele encountered the Mennonite warden Edgar Willis Epp (1931-1991), who held

[1] In 1967 the Saskatchewan Correctional Institutions were renamed as "Correctional Centres."

[2] In Canada gallows were not in federal prisons but in provincial jails. The rational being that a person sentenced to hang should hang shortly after sentencing and thus be held in an institution for those whose terms were two years or less.

the official title of "Chief Keeper." Epp was both a dedicated Anabaptist Christian and the first warden the institution ever employed who was professionally educated in corrections with a Bachelor of Social Work degree (1959) from the University of British Columbia's school of criminology and a Master of Social Work degree (1964) from the University of Manitoba. Epp arrived as warden in April, 1965, only one month before Emele's execution date. He had to face the immediate prospect of putting into working order Saskatchewan provincial gallows last used in 1946. Epp was blunt and passionate about justice and held the unshakable Christian conviction of the sacredness of human life. Rather than preparing the gallows Epp wrote to the Federal Cabinet and in effect told them he was not going to hang Waring Holt Emele nor anyone. In effect, Epp told them that if they wanted a hanging they would have to come to Prince Albert and do the dirty work themselves.

Some 22 years later in the 15 April, 1987 issue of the Saskatoon Star Phoenix Epp explained his views on this hanging in an opinion piece. Here are his words:

In April, 1965, I was the chief keeper (director) of Saskatchewan's only prison with a gallows. In that prison was a man who had been convicted of murder and sentenced to die by hanging.

My job was, among other things, to ensure the condemned man was kept in good health and did not take his own life. It seemed society was not so much interested in his death as it was in killing him.

I was, in fact, a paid employee of the state, required by law to participate in the ritual killing of a human being. Other members of the execution team were institutional staff, a sheriff and an executioner.

The sheriff's job was to prepare the noose and put the trapdoor in readiness. The executioner would travel all the way from his home in Ontario just to pull the trapdoor lever.

Why were we killing this man? Presumably to teach people that killing is wrong! This seemed very strange to me, since we did not also steal from thieves to teach that stealing is wrong, nor assault violent people to teach that assaulting people is wrong, nor did we rape people who had raped, to teach that raping is wrong.

I would have found it utterly repulsive to participate in raping and would most certainly have refused do so. It would have violated me and my moral sense of right and wrong. What would my family, my friends, my neighbors think of me if I were to take part in a ritual rape?

How much more then should I feel repulsed by taking part in the ritual killing of someone? It would have violated me and my staff and indeed all of society, which had hired me and the sheriff and the executioner.

I refused, therefore, to co-operate in the ritual preparations. While the justice system was deliberating what to do about this unanticipated act of official disobedience, the condemned man's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment I subsequently ordered Saskatchewan's last gallows to be destroyed.

I abhor murder and feel deeply for its victims. I do not, however, want the society in which I live to be so full of hate and revenge, so unimaginative in its response to violence, that it should behave collectively no better than does the murderer among us, whom we condemn. Capital punishment makes premeditated murderers of us all.

Edgar W. Epp
RR 4 Saskatoon

The 1960s was a time of heated debate over capital punishment. One suspects that such an unexpected and impertinent response to a court imposed sentence at that time had a piercing effect and the Cabinet of Lester Pearson responded by issuing an Order-in-Council redefining Emele's judgment to manslaughter with prison time and the matter was hushed up. From then on all capital punishment sentences in Canada were either delayed or commuted to terms of prison. In effect this was the last act in the de facto

abolition of the death penalty in Canada with legal abolition a later formality. A five-year moratorium on the use of the death penalty, except for murders of police and corrections officers, was put in effect in 1967. On 14 July, 1976, in a free vote, the death penalty was abolished for civilian crimes and, in 1998 for all time and for all crimes.

There is no information on Emele's response to his death sentence pardon. Because he was not hanged, the name Emele is all but forgotten, whereas the names Lucas and Turpan are always mentioned in the studies on hanging in Canada. The 1960s were times in Canada when corrections became more professional and were changing from a brutish punishment system to one of trying to change and improve inmate behaviour. With his academic credentials and past employment with the John Howard Society Epp was in the first ranks of people introducing reform and innovation into corrections. In addition to his professionalism, Epp saw his work as Christian missions and he applied his faith to it without reservation. It is interesting to speculate that one man's Christian beliefs, when put into practice, being unconcerned about personal consequences, can impact and change a part of the way an entire country operates.

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Postscript: In removing the gallows, Epp wrote to his superior, the Saskatchewan Deputy Minister of Welfare, with the request to convert a little used room into a small gym for the use by the inmates. This was without informing him that it was the gallows room. The conversion was approved. Other changes Epp introduced at this time was to remove all guns from the Correctional Institute and replace them with batons and shields. The annual budget for ammunition was used to buy sports equipment for the inmates. He also changed the appearance of the guards by having them dress in normal civilian clothing of sport jackets, shirts and ties rather than uniforms. This was to help turn prison into a more normal civilian environment to help the inmates adapt to conditions outside of their walls upon release. Many guards disaproved of these changes.

In 1966 Saskatchewan Epp was in the forefront of Canadian prison reform with its change in penal policy from punishment and treatment to rehabilitation and integration into society. In about 1982 and continuing for a decade or so, there was a return to a modified custodian and punishment orientation. In 1992 the decision was taken to once again emphasize rehabilitation and reintegration, but Saskatchewan was no longer in the forefront of corrections reform.

VW

Kaiser Kronen (Asian) Lilies blooming in all their gold and orange glory in the garden of the editor this summer. The lilies form circlets, or crowns of blooms.

BLACKS AND MENNONITES IN SASKATCHEWAN

by Dr. Timothy Epp
Associate Professor of Sociology at Redeemer University College

What does it mean to be a good neighbour? The second greatest commandment in the Bible is to love our neighbours as ourselves. However, a glance at the news reveals a world in turmoil, where we are divided in terms of race, culture, and religion. I believe that we need to rediscover our connections to each other across these dividing lines.

My research over the past decade has focused on uncovering the social history of interaction between Anabaptists (Mennonites, Mennonite Brethren, Brethren in Christ) and black settlers in Canada. While some research has been conducted on Mennonite/black relations in the United States (Leroy Bechler's book *The Black Mennonite Church in North America*, Conrad Ostwalt's studies of black Mennonite Brethren in North Carolina, Tobin Miller Shearer's research on Mennonite involvement in the Civil Rights Movement, and the recent and revelatory book *Kinship Concealed* by Dwight E. Roth and Sharon Cranford), my quest is to understand black/Mennonite relations in Canada during the 19th and early 20th centuries. When Mennonites and blacks migrated to Canada and lived as neighbours, how did they relate to one another?

In my earlier publications, I discussed how some Anabaptists in what is now Ontario aided blacks fleeing slavery via the 'underground railway', employed blacks in mills and on farms, exchanged agricultural labour with their black neighbours, and purchased land from them. A more recent migration in the early 20th century brought blacks from states such as Oklahoma and Texas north through Winnipeg (where Mennonites and blacks lived in North End, and the Mennonite Brethren-run City Mission reached out to children of black backgrounds), then westward through Saskatchewan (where blacks helped to found the towns of Maidstone and Wilkie, and the Eldon school district) and into Alberta (where blacks settled in several areas, including the Amber Valley).

Prior to this migration, Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren had some contact with African-Americans in Oklahoma, primarily through the church-run missions (Darlington, Post Oak, Cantonment). Reports exist of 'negroes' attending these missions, as well as 'black Indians' (for example, Cherokee Freedmen or Creek Freedmen).

Some Mennonites had been involved in the land runs which grabbed up 'excess' land which had been the home of First Nations people (and perhaps some freedmen). Many African-Americans had migrated to Oklahoma's 'Indian Territory' to find freedoms denied them elsewhere (the Mayes and LaFayette families described later in this article have some history as freedmen amongst the Cherokee and Creek).

However, when Oklahoma became a state in 1907, these families faced discrimination in terms of employment, education and politics, as well as violence from their Caucasian neighbours. Once again denied their freedom, many African-Americans found themselves struggling to provide for their families.

A photograph from approximately 1918 depicts two African-American children, perhaps migrant workers, picking cotton on what is known to be a 'Mennonite farm' near the town of Cordell. Cordell, OK.,

Children picking cotton in Oklahoma
Photo Courtesy of John Klassen family

was apparently a 'sundown town' with sanctions against blacks found in the area after dark, and so farmers would need to pick up the workers in the morning and return them in the evening.

Around 1910, immigration agents from Canada traveled to Oklahoma to advertise relatively inexpensive land in the Canadian prairies. Partly as a result of their efforts, over one thousand blacks migrated to Canada between 1905 and 1912. Immigrating through Emerson, MB and Portal SK, these pioneers didn't always find the freedom they hoped for, and continued to face discrimination in their new homeland.

Newspapers read by Mennonites on the prairies such as *Der Nordwesten* warned of the great number of crimes committed by 'negroes', arguing that "these instances should convince us, apart from other reasons, how undesirable such an increase is to our population" (Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta Newsletter, March 2005, p. 11).

While Mennonite newspapers carried articles praising the stalwart qualities of some 'negroes' (Zionsbote articles included 'Eines Negers Treue', 11 November 1903, and Zwei Edle Neger 6369: 17 Aug 1910), the *Mennonitische Rundschau* carried an article in December 1924, 'Wie Lange Dauert Noch die Herrschaft der Weiszen Rasse?', which expressed the author's fears of the growth of the 'coloured race'.

In Canada, several MPs helped to incite a public panic, resulting in an order-in-council in 1911 under the federal government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, to ban all African-American immigration for the period of at least one year, in light of the perception that blacks couldn't adapt to the Canadian climate and therefore were 'deemed unsuitable' (see *Deemed Unsuitable*, by R. Bruce Shepard). However, by that time the bulk of black migration to the prairies had occurred.

Shiloh Baptist Church

In Saskatchewan, a dozen black families got off the train in North Battleford, and made their way to a site approximately thirteen kilometres north of the town of Maidstone.

Two of the prominent founding families were those of Julius Caesar ('Cecil') and Emma Lane, and Joseph and Mattie Mayes. Mattie, or 'Grandma' Mayes was born in slavery on a plantation in Georgia. Other surnames of black families included Bailey, Beely, Boyd, Cotton, Crawford, Eason, Farmer, Forster, Foster, Gaston, Harper, Robinson, Taborn, and Wright. Black families closer to Lashburn included the Gordons and the Coopers.

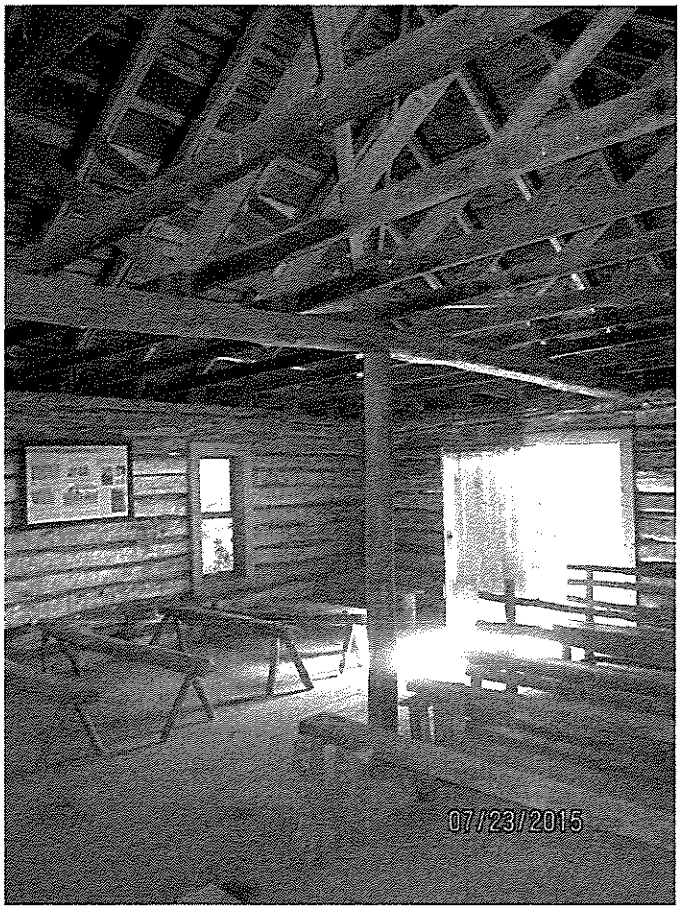
In his monumental book *The Blacks in Canada: a History*, Robin W. Winks writes:

> "The first bloc of Oklahoma Negroes arrived in Saskatchewan in October of 1909. They sought out isolation from white communities, proximity to railheads, and distance from the American border. Unwilling to move from the railroads that had brought them - unlike the whites who had begun to pre-empt good land at some distance from the tracks - the black settlers had to accept inferior allotments, since the richer farmland near the lines was already taken up" (Winks, 1971, p.303).

Not only was the land difficult to farm, but white neighbours also resisted the plans of these newcomers to establish a racially-integrated school. Racist attitudes were persistent.

Keith Schwartz, grandson of Pauline Schwartz (member of the Maidstone MB Church for thirty years) recalls: "In the broader community, some people wouldn't dance with blacks; in the Milleton District, at Christmas concerts, we would take a ring from someone else" [this seems to be a reference to an

exchange between boys and girls]. "People wouldn't take a ring from black people; but they treated me like gold."



Shiloh Baptist Church interior. a Provincial Heritage Site.

However, the black pioneers were persistent in their efforts to establish a community, building a church within a year of their arrival and a school (Eldon) shortly thereafter. Today the church is preserved as a Provincial Historic Site.

In the ensuing decades, Mennonite Brethren would also enter the Maidstone area, reaching out to German-speaking settlers in the area. In 1926 the MB church in Maidstone was established with a membership of twelve, under pastor John Bettcher.

In 1936, the Lashburn MB church was founded, its members bearing surnames including Schmitke, Martin, Brandt, Rise, Sommerfeld, Polinsky, Winter, and Hauff. Some of these families lived near farms owned by blacks; for example, the Polinsky family were neighbours to the Crawfords. Josh Crawford had been born in Alabama, and his wife Normal was born in Texas. They had migrated to Canada along with the Shiloh families between 1910 and 1912.

Children from the Brandt and Polinsky families attended school with the Crawford children. Two other black children lived with the Crawfords: Marie Weiszbrodt ("I'm curious about how Marie acquired a German surname...") and Merle Stevens.

Some of the black families operated threshing teams, which traveled back and forth from the Maidstone area to Lloydminster, at times helping other farmers in the area. Reports of these teams come from school districts located near to Eldon, including Dry Gully, Bear Island and Marie Hill.

Several teachers in those areas who may have been Mennonite include: Miss Penner (Maidstone, 1932-1938), Miss M. Musselman (Maidstone, 1941-45), Miss Elizabeth Neufeld (Bear Island, 1943); Lilian Martin (Dry Gully, 1942-43), Ruby R. Dyck (Marie Hill, 1944-45), Mr. E. Berg (Maidstone, 1945-46), Carl Blumer (Dry Gully, 1949), Dorothy Schmale (Eldon 1950-52), Jacob Thiessen (Dry Gully, 1955-57), Elizabeth Toews (Dry Gully, 1961-62). Black teachers included James W. Gordon (Eldon, 1918) and Miss Ina LaFayette (Eldon, 1920-23).

Ina LaFayette (right) & another teacher, courtesy: Carol LaFayette-Boyd

Thomas and Katherine Kraft moved into the Eldon district in 1929 and lived on the John Mayes homestead. The Kraft children attended the Eldon school. Albert and Mary Kraft lived in the Bear Island district, and owned a horse named 'Nigger' (dogs and horses were often named 'Nigger' or 'Darky', and large prairie boulders were known as 'nigger heads').

Peter Penner also lived in that area.

Life was not always easy for farmers in the

Maidstone district. Even though the black settlers had experience in farming, the stony ground made it difficult to grow crops.

Gustav Behrens, a farmer in the Eldon area, recalls the difficulties of the 1930s: "Times were real tough in 1936. The price of cattle was low and the crop was poor so we did not have enough straw." Neighbours turned to each other for support.

The friendship between 'Grandma' Schwartz and 'Grandma' Mayes was something of legend. Working together as midwives on the prairies, the two delivered several babies in the area.

Pauline's granddaughter Audrey describes her own birth in *North of the Gully*: "On June 1, 1941, I made my way into the world in the two-room log house that was my home until I was four or five. Dr. Kirkpatrick did not have time to get there, so I was ushered in by Mattie Mayes and Grandma Schwartz."

Audrey's brother Keith recalls "Grandma and Mattie Mayes served together as midwives; when Melinda Mayes was born, Grandma Mayes named her; when my sister Audrey was born on June 1, 1941, Grandma Schwartz and Grandma Mayes delivered her; they delivered lots of other babies, and were known in the areas as midwives."

Gladys Dirks with Madam Mayes; where they stayed when teaching DVBS around Maidstone. Photo courtesy of Rhonda Jantz

In addition, Abraham and Pauline were quick to help their neighbours. Murray Mayes, father of football hero Rueben Mayes, writes "If it had not been for food given us by these kind people, we would have sometimes gone hungry."

Carolyn Mayes recalls her father-in-law Milton saying: "Always be respectful and good to the Mennonites, as they kept the Mayes families from starving many times when times got tough."

Keith Schwartz recalls: "My Grandpa [Abraham] farmed at Maple Creek, moved due to drought in 1925, settled on land owned by the Mayes; he became very close friends to the black people. My grandma [Pauline] gave them meat and vegetables and whatever they needed."

The Schwartz family would also play a role in missions outreach by Mennonite and MB youth to the Eldon/Shiloh area.

The Bethany Prayer League, founded in 1932-33, and its successor, the Western Children's Mission (WCM), in 1937, saw hundreds of enthusiastic youth do mission work across the province (and later in Alberta and British Columbia) in areas with no or few churches. Murray Mayes recalls the 'missionaries' as staying at the Schwartz house and leading bible sessions at the church. Daily Vacation Bible School programs operated at the Eldon School (and at times at the Shiloh Church), as well as at other locations in the Maidstone and Lashburn areas.

Gladys Dirks, a young Mennonite woman from Waldheim, worked with the WCM in the late 1930s, and described Grandma Mayes as a "loud, tobacco-chewing woman" who would burst into praise during services.

While this may have been one of the first encounters with the Shiloh community, another WCM missionary, Mary Fast, provides an alternative account of WCM beginnings at Shiloh in her memoirs:

There were many open doors in Northern Saskatchewan. Russian, German, English, black, and white communities all needed some willing couple to take up the challenge. Contacts were established with a black community. They had a vacant community building, but no minister. If we'd do the speaking, they would come.

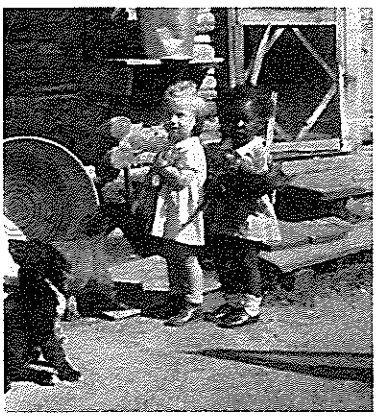
Her account reflects some apprehensions of WCM workers at Shiloh: *Ben Kroeker (with WCM), and three other single members were present for a first meeting. To break the ice with the blacks, we had prepared a so called 'Spiritual Song'. Rhythmic utterance, loud and strong but*

unintelligible, came from the audience. Oh, oh! Someone was affected. Adversely?

Looking back through the corner of my eye, I saw that Grandma Maze, a dear old saint of one hundred years of age, was the producer of this unintelligible utterance. Something hit her emotional chords, and with one quick move she was on her feet, praising God in unmatched rhythm - on maximum volume! She jumped up and down with ease like a yo-yo! The blacks seemed undisturbed by it. Obviously, this was not a first-time experience for them. Her adult son came to her aid and gently assisted her outdoors.

This instilled some apprehension in me. Fear? Probably. Should she be emotionally affected through someone's prayers or singing, she might repeat her stunt. At her age, would she succumb to a heart attack or breakdown? Some of the joy of working with them was threatened. Should we leave and go elsewhere? I would have preferred that, at the time.

We had already settled into our home for the summer. Hadn't we committed ourselves to work wherever He opened a door? We must remain.



Audrey Fast with a friend at Shiloh. Photo: courtesy of Audrey Fast

The WCM was fairly successful in its efforts. In 1943, sixteen people (primarily children) attended DVBS at Eldon, and there were ten conversions. Peter W. Fast (together with his wife Mary, with children Ken and Audrey, although her name doesn't appear in the WCM records) and Bert Sommerfeld led this program.

In 1945, eighteen were enrolled, with three conversions under the leadership of Margaret Dyck and Anne Redekopp. DVBS programs also operated under the WCM in neighbouring school districts of Sewton, Idawell, Dee Valley and Tebo Corner. These sessions are remembered fondly within the family histories in North of the Gully, including those of black settlers.

The WCM also operated in at least one other location with a black family, Blaine Lake. An account in the WCM records suggests that at least one of the DVBS lessons, about sin and the 'black heart', needed to be rethought in light of its reception by the children of one black family.

Mennonites also interacted with blacks in the Herschel area. Lewis William LaFayette, whose great-great-grandfather had been freed from slavery after serving in the American Civil War, had immigrated to Canada in 1906 because of the promise of land and freedom. He purchased land between Fiske and Herschel, and over the years acquired a Waterloo steam engine, a gas engine, and an International combine. Together with his brothers Goldie and Jesse, Lewis organized a harvesting crew that helped on neighbouring farms to bring the crops in.

Lewis and his wife Lillie were both born in Oskaloosa, Iowa. The school where the LaFayette children attended between Fiske and Herschel would also take on the name Oskaloosa.

Oskaloosa School. Photo taken July 24, 2015

The Mennonites with whom I have spoken describe the LaFayettes as good neighbours, and the children as bright and athletic. A Mr. Krahn recalls, "I ran against Carol Lafayette a number of times...she could run like the wind and this little country school won all the track meets because no one could keep up with her. There were a number of athletes in the family."

The LaFayettes in turn describe their Mennonite neighbours in positive terms. Ruby LaFayette referred to her family as "having the benefit of living between two Mennonite churches" [Fiske and Herschel], and notes that Anne and Henry Klassen were friends of her family. She also recalls the Webers, neighbours to the LaFayettes: "Bill Weber remembers my dad driving his team of horses into Herschel with a load of grain; he remembered that when his father was dying from an aneurism, dad came over with a vehicle, asking if they wanted him to take their father to the doctor."

Several teachers at Oskaloosa came from Mennonite backgrounds. Peter Paul Lepp (1941-42). Peter's daughter Genevieve recalls her trip to Herschel to visit her father: "I was in teacher's college; my dad taught at Oskaloosa. Homer Lafayette picked me up at the train station. When I got home, I realized this was almost an all-black community. The black children were very kind to the teacher. Esther [LaFayette] became my friend."

Norman Epp (1843-44) was another teacher at the school, and Bernhard Klassen (1937-39).

However, not everyone in the Herschel area appreciated their black neighbours. Some aspects of local culture may be considered racist today, including the photo of people revealed in aspects of black culture through 'blackface theatre' Ruby LaFayette recalls "The Moore family wasn't so welcoming; Roy Moore didn't like us so much. He didn't like black people."

When Ina LaFayette applied for a teaching position in Herschel, a local harness-maker/shoe-repairer named Jimmy Ballentine said that he wouldn't have a black woman teach his children. According to the LaFayette family history, "many Herschel residents stood behind him."

Finally, the story of Bernhard Klassen stands as an example that Mennonites could be as subject to the prevailing racism of the day as anyone else. Bernhard was born in Rudnerweide, Ukraine, in 1918, just as the Russian Revolution swept over the nation. Emigrating to Mexico, the family eventually found their way to Saskatchewan. In her autobiography *Jesus Led Me All the Way,* Katharine Klassen Snider recalls the first day of school at Oskaloosa with her brother: p. 26-27:

> "The very next day after arriving in Herschel, Ben and I were sent to school. The children in all the other families also attended school. It was not a big shock to attend an all-English school, as most of the Mennonite children were learning and struggling with the language. But when we moved to our new farm, Ben and I had to start fresh in our new school. Here we were strangers. There were Irish, English, French and five black students. All were born in Canada, and all were at home with English.
>
> Oskaloosa was the name of our school. It didn't sound English to me and I found out later that it was a native name. I also soon found out that English had many other borrowed words from other languages, even German.
>
> Seeing we were the only two new ones, we had to prove ourselves. Many tricks were tried on us and for some reason, the black students took a special delight in teasing us. However, our dad kept encouraging us saying, "They will get used to you, don't worry about the kids, listen to the teacher, and learn at least a few new words every day. You'll soon catch up to the rest." He was right, I soon caught up to where I should be and Ben did very well. In later years he became the teacher in Oskaloosa."

Bernhard did return to teach at Oskaloosa after attending the German-English Academy at Rosthern (now Rosthern Junior College). However, he became disillusioned with what he perceived as the lack of intellectual development amongst his students. He especially became critical of the black children in his class.

Bernhard's life would take a significant turn; after reading *Mein Kampf* and becoming convinced of the natural logic of racial intelligence, he would emigrate to the United States and found the white supremacist World Church of the

Creator.

Klassen would later commit suicide after his wife passed away from illness.

One of his church's followers would become infamous in 1999 when he shot and killed the former Northwestern University basketball coach Ricky Byrdsong, who was African-American. The account of this incident is recorded in the book *No Random Act.*

In his book *Black and Mennonite,* Hubert Brown wrote: "To be brothers and sisters in the Lord we must understand the dynamics of black/white relations and its implications in Christian faith. An examination of the historical nature and development of black/white relations is necessary for understanding the status and reality of their relation today" (Brown 1976, 98).

In order for Mennonites to truly engage in interracial and multicultural dialogue, we must also recognize the ways by which our own identities have been shaped by our encounters with others across lines of race, culture and ethnicity. While the accounts of Mennonite/black relations I have found so far have been generally positive, we have also been subject to the same fears and tensions as our surrounding society.

At times we have taken a stand, resisted racism and found true friends amongst black neighbours. At other times, we have succumbed to these fears. We need to recover stories of both connection and discord in order to truly understand our place in this world and to move forward towards new relationships in a diverse world.

As I am continuing my studies of Black/Mennonite relations in Saskatchewan, I would be most grateful for any pertinent information. Please contact me at: tepp@redeemer.ca.

TE

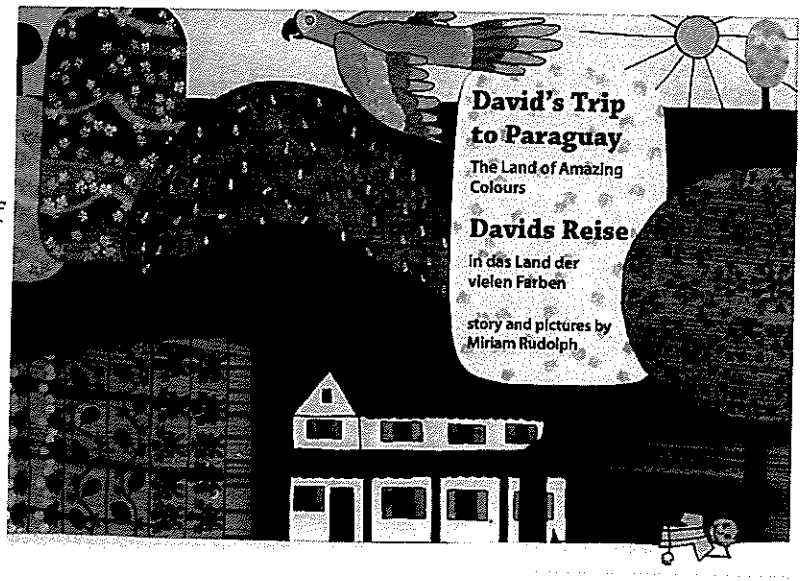
Ed. Note that Dr. Timothy Epp will be speaking in Saskatoon at our November 12th Peace Event.

Use Your Archives to Research Cemeteries - part 2

Drake Village Cemetery
Dundurn Hillside Gardens 1905 Cemetery
Ebenfeld Mennonite Cemetery (MB) Near Laird,
Eigenheim Mennonite Church Cemetery
Elim (now Kelstern) MB Church Cemetery
Fielding Cemetery
Fiske Community Cemetery
Glenbush - Hoffnungsfeld Mennonite Cemetery
Glenbush Mennonite Brethren Cemetery
Gnadenau Mennonite Brethren Cemetery
Gnadental Cemetery (East of McMahon)
Greenfarm Mennonite Brethren Cemetery
Gruenfeld Old Colony Cemetery
Gruenthal Bergthal Cemetery
Gruenthal Village Cemetery
Guenter Private Cemetery
Guenter Family Cemetery
Guernsey Sharon Cemetery
Hague Bergthal Cemetery
Hague - Blumenort - (private) Cemetery
Hague - Blumenthal Mennonite Cemetery
Hague (NEW) Cemetery
Hague (OLD) Cemetery
Hamm Fehr Private Cemetery
Hanley Mennonite Cemetery
Haultain Trinity Lutheran Cemetery
Hepburn-Carson see: Carson-Community
Hepburn Cemetery
Herbert Cemetery
Hochfeld Mennonite Cemetery
Hochstadt Cemetery
Horse Lake Mennonite Cemetery
Kronsthal (near Osler) Cemetery
Laird - Snow Bird School (district) Private
Langham 8 Unregistered Cemeteries
Langham Bible Church Cemetery
Langham Community Cemetery
Langham Emmanuel Baptist Cemetery
Langham Mierau Family Cemetery
Lone Grave (Huron) Cemetery
Lost River Bergthal Cemetery
Mayfair Bethel (Hoffnungsfelder) Cemetery
Mayfair Community Cemetery
Maymont Community Cemetery
McMahon Old Colony Cemetery
McMahon Small Village Cemetery
Medstead and District Cemetery
Morse Schoenthal Cemetery
Neu-Stadt Cemetery *....list continues on page 24*

Book Review: **David's Trip to Paraguay: The Land of Amazing Colours /David's Reise in das Land der vielen Farben** by Miriam Rudolph, Winnipeg, Manitoba, CMU Press, 2011, 32pp. Hardcover, Can$22.00 (ISBN: 978-0-920718-91-9)

- Reviewed by Anne Klaassen



In her book, author and illustrator, Miriam Rudolph retells, for her daughter Eva, her grandfather's story of his trip from Manitoba to Paraguay, as a young boy with his family. As the title indicates, the book is bilingual, written in German and English. The German and English texts are placed side by side together with large colourful pictures on the opposite page.

The story begins in southern Manitoba where David lives on a farm with his family. The winters are cold, and for much of the year, the landscape there is covered with ice and snow. Frequently, when he sees the train pass by, he dreams of "far away places". His dream is realized when his family decides to move to Paraguay, the land "in which it never snowed" and where everything was colourful. They travel to New York City by train, and from there by an old steamer across the ocean to the port city of Buenos Aires. Once in Paraguay, they continue their trip by river steamer, by a slow cargo train, and, finally by ox cart to their new home in "interior Paraguay".

Along the way, David was impressed with what he saw: New York City with the tall buildings, the "bluish green ocean", the "red river banks and large green crocodiles", and "a lime green bottle tree". Several features make the book appealing to young readers, say, from ages 5 to 9:

- The opener, "Tell me a story, grandpa/Erzähl mir eine Geschichte, Opa".
- Emphasis on bright colours in phrases such as, "a red barn", "tiefblauen Himmel", "orange grain elevator", and "large green crocodiles".
- Use of repetition, such as the phrase, ".. .he knew he was going the right way/ er wüsste das er auf dem richtigen Weg war".
- Bright colourful pictures.

At the back of the book, Rudolph summarizes the life of her grandfather, David P. Guenther. She tells of the many hardships he and his family endured while on the trip, and then life in the Chaco. As a young boy, these hardships didn't seem to impress him as much in his story telling, as did "all the beautiful things he saw and experienced".

The author grew up in Loma Plata, a Mennonite community in Paraguay. In 2003, she moved to Winnipeg to study Fine Arts at the University of Manitoba. She works as an artist and has displays of work in places such as the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg.

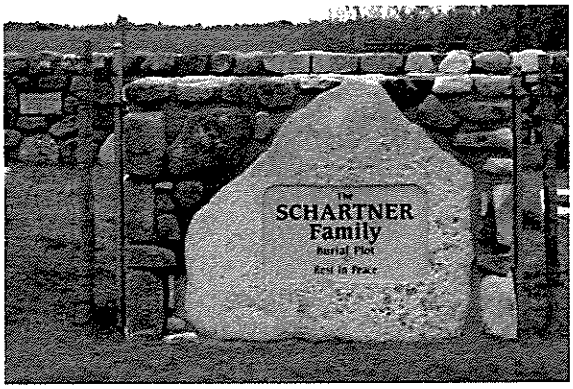
For parents who wish to expose their youngsters to a bit of German, this book, David's Trip to Paraguay, could be considered as a good choice.

AK

ED. Note: *this book is NOT available through MHSS book sales.* You may request it at your local bookstore, or order it from the publisher:
CMU Press,
500 Shaftesbury Boulevard
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3P 2N2:
or call 204-486-3300.
You may also purchase it is from this webpage:
http://www.cmu.ca/cmupress.php?s=children

Our Database of Mennonite Cemeteries in Saskatchewan

by Ruth Marlene Friesen



For about twenty months I have been working on a project to set up our database of Mennonite cemeteries in Saskatchewan to our main website, *mhss.sk.ca/cemeteries/*

It was begun by Al Mireau, and posted on behalf of MHSS on the freepages section of rootsweb, a website sponsored by Ancestry.com.

That batch of cemetery tombstone lists grew and grew, and Al asked for assistance.

Helen Fast, whom we know as a faithful and helpful worker at the Archives, stepped in as a volunteer, and kept the lists updated faithfully for a long time. However, she and her husband wanted to spend some winters down south, so I was asked to move the large database of about 130+ cemetery lists to our domain website proper.

It is now at: ***http://mhss.sk.ca/cemeteries/***

Another thing: I have renamed some of the cemeteries with both the community/place and the church name if it is owned by a specific church denomination. This is in the hopes that it will help searchers who know one or the other of these details but not both.

We depend totally on volunteers keeping us posted on any additions or corrections, so it seemed wise to make it easier to update the cemetery lists quickly. There is a web page about each cemetery with whatever information and photos that have been provided. If there is a list of all the graves in that cemetery, I provide a link on that page to the list, which is a PDF document. It will show up in the browser window, but you are also able to click on the print and/or the download icons just above the document to print it out, or to save it to your computer.

If someone, perhaps a caretaker, or an interested person who is aware of new burials, or corrections to be made on that list will notify me, I can – in just a matter of minutes – update that PDF file, and upload it again. (That is a simple matter of copying the file from one side of my computer screen to the other).

This will simplify and streamline the updating of the cemeteries.

However, I already have a very full life, and cannot go trekking around to visit cemeteries just to see if I can discover updates. MHSS cannot hire anyone to do this either. So I'm appealing for volunteers to help with this.

Believe me, I've done this in the past, and it can be a very pleasant activity. When I was working on my family history book, *A Godly Inheritance*, back in the mid-1980s, I visited the Chortitz cemetery west of Hague, and carefully copied down the text of every tombstone.

Later, when I was translating the journals of Katharina (Reimer) Neudorf – Dyck, I wanted to check on names in the Hochfeld cemetery and also the one at Great Deer, where this Katharina had been buried. Margaret (Bartsch) Kroeker was a good friend, who loved to go 'gallavanting' (her term for joy-riding in the country), so I offered to take her along when I went to do my research. She hobbled around the Hochfeld cemetery and told me stories about many of the names we read there, as that had been the village of her birth and where she grew up.

For the visit to the Great Deer (M.B.) cemetery, I prepared a picnic and took along not only Margaret, but also her sister Tina Braun, and their cousin, Helen (Bartsch) Hoeppner from Waldheim.

Was I ever glad I did!

Helen's mother had been the oldest daughter of the Katharina, whose journals I was translating, and Helen had grown up on the very yard

where the cemetery is, and she KNEW for a fact that a wrong tombstone had been put on the grave of her grandmother, Katherina (Reimer) Neudorf Dyck. There were two Katharina Dycks buried there, and the stones had been reversed. Now, how would I have known that, but for a woman who had been a very aware teenager at the time?

I have already been corresponding on behalf of MHSS, with some people who look after certain cemeteries. But I would like to see more take up this research. In fact, if you don't know where to start, may I make a suggestion?

There are some small private burial grounds. Perhaps only two or three small graves made in the early pioneering years when there was not a proper church or community cemetery nearby. Sometimes, when a family had a stillborn child or one that died in infancy, they might do a quick burial in the corner of their garden or a field, not wanting to trouble anyone else for what might seem a private little matter.

Out of respect it just seems as if someone should record what data can be discovered, and - perhaps put a little fence around that area, so that it may be guarded – not plowed over. If we could add whatever information you find to our database, it could be of great value to someone who is researching those very names and families involved.

Just the other day someone wrote in to ask where to find such a small private cemetery near Bluebird, or Meeting Lake Community pasture. I had no clue where that is.

I've heard from them again, and they have driven around and around looking for this cemetery. They have learned a few things.

"The cemetery should be east of the Bluebird school plaque (school is no longer there, just a plaque), which is almost directly east of Rabbit Lake and Mullingar, directly south of Spiritwood, and NE of Hafford.

"We also found the Bluebird church (now a residence) with the Bluebird cemetery (with some relatives buried there) behind the old church.

"...We also found Meeting Lake Community Pasture, but not the cemetery which is supposed to be located in the middle of it, according to the map we picked up at the Mayfair municipal office. When my husband lived there it was known as Sand Beach, but it is now a native reserve and the lake is now called Mistawasis Lake."

How can we help people like this find the cemeteries they are looking for?

You might enjoy this enough to do it as a favour for others. For another example, I've had some email correspondence with Sandra Buck from Alberta. She wrote about a small private cemetery at Dunelm, SK, which is not in our database:

"I was born in Swift Current and I'm doing genealogy on my father's side of the family. My grandmother (my dad's mother) was Katharina Sawatzky, and her family and first husband (Krahn) are buried in that cemetery. He ran the grain elevator in Dunelm. If I was there I'd help ya in a heart beat, but I'm in Alberta. If I knew who was maintaining the cemetery, or if it will be looked after years from now, it would be good to know."

I wish I knew a volunteer who would drive out there, find this cemetery and bring back photos and whatever information is on any tombstones that might be there. The dates given could help Sandra in her research too.

Optimist that I am, I hope a number of people will be inspired to take up this kind of research and email, or mail it in to me. Will you be one?

Not to belabour this point too much, but I've just had emails from Adrian Humphreys, whose familiy has been hunting for the contact for the cemetery at Ruddell, to see about, or get permission to repair the grave stone of a relative. They asked at the community office in North Battleford, and were given a name but it turned out to be a dead-end. No such number. How can one find the authority figure

make machine parts like the valving, and front

wheels with the steering, and of all parts, the governor. There needed to be a big piston, and crank shaft, and drive wheel, and belt pulley. Piece by piece, and with a lot of work, he built a smaller version of a steam engine tractor - that operated.

Jake Berg brought in a person who could 'time' the engine, as that was one thing that Hank was not familiar with. They operated it on compressed air and everything worked just fine. There was only one little thing. To operate on steam the boiler needed to be inspected, but that would not work as the whole machine was not engineered.

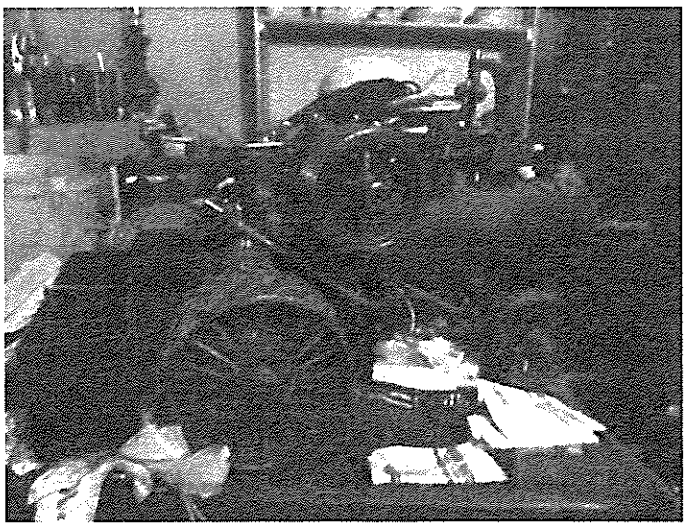
I asked Hank if he had ever operated a steam engine tractor, and he said, no, but he remembered what it looked like, and he had a good idea how it worked. Hank and Jake made a few trips to a real steam engine for measurements.

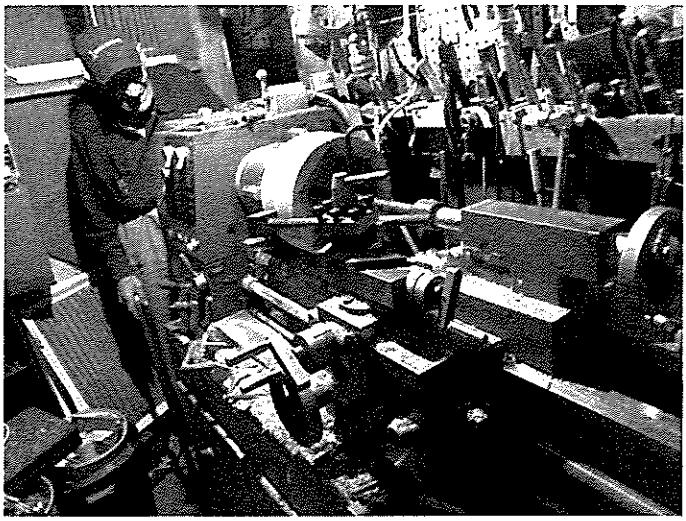
Hank was very fortunate that his son, Larry, is involved with Davis Machine Co, as their scrap pile served as a very valuable source of supplies.

When you see what Hank has all built out of scrap steel it is mind boggling!

In the back yard is a home-made version of a forge which consists of a wheel rim, and a blower that is powered by an electric motor.

There are a number of little model steam





engine tractors standing around in his house.

There is also an array of stationary steam engines, and even one that you just put on your wood-fired stove.

In his garage I saw what was a smaller replica of an Oil Pull Rumbley tractor.

Hank built a replica of the first car that Henry Ford built. This is a unique little 2-seater that does not have a steering wheel, but rather a lever that you swing from side to side to turn a corner. This is the car that Hank is hoping to be able to drive to the A&W for coffee.

Hank has also taken to turning laminated wood. He has dozens of bowls on a shelf that are waiting for some one to need and use.

Jake Berg will not take Hank to measure steam engine parts anymore, as he is as good as blind.

Hank has had another set-back too, as he fell and broke a bone in his neck. When I last talked to Hank he was full of hope that he would get better and be able to drive that little car to the A&W on Idylwyld in Saskatoon.

We wish Hank all the best and hope that his wish could be fulfilled.

D B s

Looking at Horseshoes

A very proud cowboy stepped into a blacksmith's shop. He picked up a hot horseshoe; immediately he dropped it.

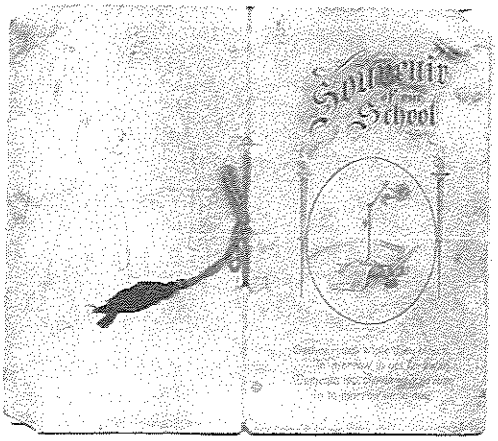
"Is it too hot?" smirked the blacksmith.

"Oh no," drawled the cowboy. "Just don't take me long to look at a horseshoe."

Elmer Driedger's Souvenirs of Osler

by Susan Braun with Ruth Marlene Friesen

The Town Office in Osler received an email from Tom Driedger, who lives in Etobicoke, ON. He was going through the estate of his father, Elmer Driedger, who grew up in Osler. Elmer was born on January 14, 1913 and died in 1985, on September 21. He had his elementary education in Osler, high school in Rosthern, and then on to university in Saskatoon, and eventually abroad at the Marburg university on a scholarship, and also at Kiel, but returned before the war. In 1963 he received an honorary degree from the University of Ottawa. Elmer spent his career teaching at universities. He was librarian at the Supreme Court of Canada, and also an Assistant Deputy and Deputy Minister of Justice in the government. All this has made Elmer an illustrious son of Osler.

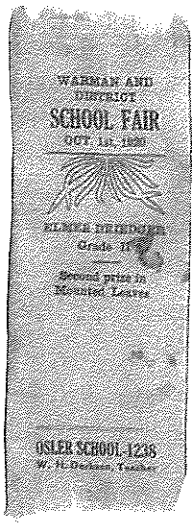


His son Tom, as we said, was now wondering if Osler had a museum and would care to have some of his father's souvenirs of Osler. Our little museum was just about to be closed down. Since I, (Susan), am not only on the Town Council, but also on the board of MHSS, we were able to inform Tom that the MHSS Archives would be glad to accept some of these items.

Tom first sent a number of slides that Elmer took in 1959 of buildings in Osler and area. The slides are sharp and of excellent quality. Osler is very thankful to have copies of these photos of the Osler Train Station, the train tracks and elevators, Osler Mennonite Church, and the first school that had multi-uses, etc.

The slides will be kept in the MHSS Archives and the print copies in the town office.

Tom sent other items which the town office will house. Photocopies were made of the letter from Dominion Bureau of Statistics, "Souvenir of our School" booklet, and a ribbon.



The letter is of the population of Osler (1906 - 1961) in five year intervals. Elmer Driedger, grade 2, received the ribbon at a Warman and District School Fair, Oct. 1,1920. The booklet, Osler School District No. 1238, Saskatoon County (1918-1919) has a photo of A. M. Driedger, chairman, a list of 50 students and teacher - Edwin Samie Bartel. These items are in very good conditions - also almost 100 years old. The photocopies will be housed in the archives.

These are very valuable articles. The town of Osler is very thankful Elmer Driedger preserved the items and that Tom donated them to the town.

Have you ever asked yourself, "Why am I keeping this junk?" It could be documents, photos, scrapbooks of clippings of local events, wedding announcements, obituaries, etc. These items are of great value to the Mennonite Historical Society. They are used for research on genealogy, school and area books, etc. It just takes a phone call or email to MHSS to arrange to show them to us.

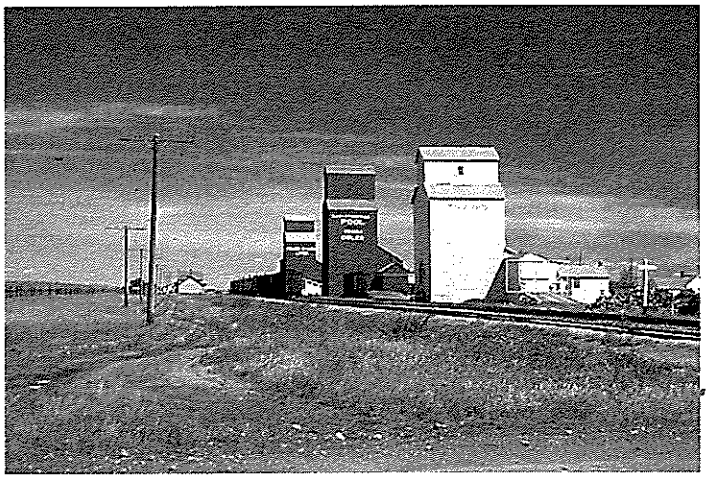
Don't decide that these things are worth nothing because they look a little worn or used, or because you don't understand the history and the meaning behind them.

At MHSS we have people experienced in judging the value of these old items, and we would much prefer that you bring them in and let our experts decide their value. If they truly have no historical value, and you could throw them out, we'll tell you. Or give us permission to throw them out when we have assessed them.

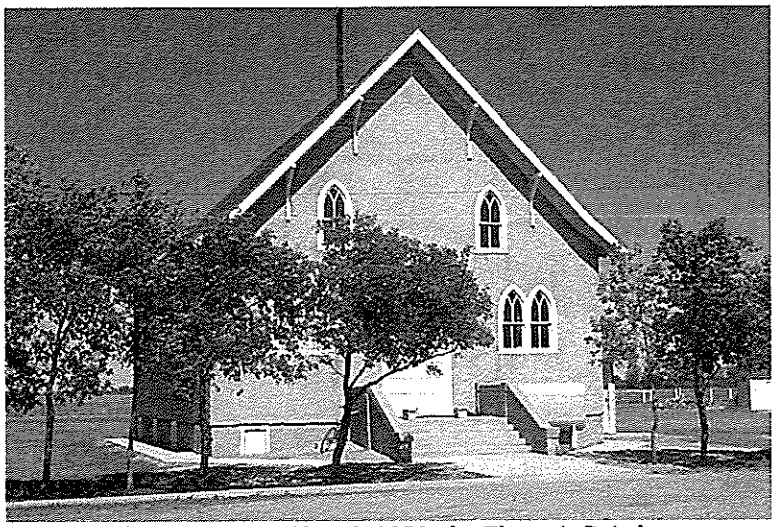
You could make some researcher or historian or genealogist very excited.

SB/RMF

Osler Train Station in 1959 - photo by Elmer A. Driedger



Osler grain elevators in 1959 - by Elmer A. Driedger



Osler Mennonite Church 1959 - by Elmer A. Driedger

Websites
MHSS: *mhss.sk.ca*

Cemeteries: Transitioning to the above site, but still available at:
freepages.genealogy-rootsweb.com/~skmhss

Mennonite Encyclopedia Online: (GAMEO)
gameo.org/news/mennonite-encylopedia-online

E-Updates Ezine (announcements email):
Subscribe by entering your email on our website page:
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Send in Feedback & Stories

You are cordially invited to send in feedback, news items, stories, articles, photographs, church histories, etc., to be considered for publication. The editor is willing to help polish it up so it looks professional. See contact info to the right -->

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